

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are requested.

By the current amendment apparatus claims 1-8 have been cancelled, whereby only method claims 9-29 remain. Each of independent method claims 9, 17, 23 and 25 have been amended so as to further define the invention.

Specifically, each of these independent claims now requires

providing a manufacturing or processing apparatus in an external environment, positioning the manufacturing or processing apparatus adjacent to a partition wall partitioning the external environment from a clean room, and supplying a semiconductor wafer from the clean room to the apparatus through an opening defined in the partition wall.

Because the manufacturing or processing apparatus is positioned adjacent to a partition wall partitioning the external environment from the clean room, and is not located within the clean room, an internal pressure of the apparatus can be controlled to be higher than a pressure exterior of the polishing apparatus, whereby a semiconductor wafer can be processed in a clean atmosphere within the apparatus. To the contrary, were the apparatus located within the clean room, the pressure within the clean room (i.e. exterior of the apparatus) would be maintained to be higher than pressure within the apparatus, whereby a semiconductor wafer would not be processed in a clean atmosphere within the apparatus.

Claims 9-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Oishi et al. in view of Kitano et al. The references relied upon by the Examiner are not believed to be applicable with regard to the currently amended claims for the following reasons.

As expressed above, each of the independent claims now requires positioning a manufacturing or processing apparatus within an external environment and adjacent to a partition wall partitioning the external environment from a clean room, and supplying a semiconductor wafer

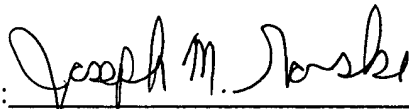
from the clean room to the apparatus through an opening defined in the partition wall. These operations are lacking from the references relied upon by the Examiner. In this regard, in neither embodiment of Oishi et al., is the CMP apparatus located within an external environment and adjacent to a partition wall that partitions the external environment from a clean room. Indeed, in the second embodiment the CMP apparatus is in clean room A. Kitano et al. does not resolve these deficiencies of Oishi et al., and accordingly, claims 9-29 are allowable over Oishi et al. and Kitano et al. either taken alone or in combination.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

If after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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